

VZCZCXRO6045  
RR RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHYD #0894/01 1991401  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 181401Z JUL 07  
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7954  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1638  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1888  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 YAOUNDE 000894

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/C AND INR/AA  
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA ACTION OFFICERS  
EUCOM FOR J5-1 AFRICA DIVISION AND POLAD YATES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/17/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KMCC](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [CM](#)  
SUBJECT: CAMEROON ELECTIONS: CAMPAIGN KICKS INTO HIGH GEAR

REF: A. YAOUNDE 865  
[1](#)B. YAOUNDE 741

Classified By: Acting pol/econ chief Tad Brown for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. With the July 22 polls just five days away, campaigning across Cameroon has intensified to a fever pitch as political elites drum up support for their candidates in the Parliamentary and municipal elections. The ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), largely indistinct from the national government it controls, has campaigned aggressively to protect and shore up its dominance of Parliament and extend CPDM influence into areas traditionally held by the leading opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF). Among the most compelling storylines of these elections thus far is an undercurrent of populist backlash to the domineering central leadership of both the CPDM and SDF and the related ascension of smaller, more localized and ethnically-based parties. No one expects the election to result in a radical change in the balance of power, but most observers agree that the electoral process this year represents a generally positive trend for Cameroon's democracy. End summary.

-----  
The CPDM Seeks to Strengthen its Hand  
-----

[1](#)2. (C) The unofficial campaign period kicked off on July 7, but more than 45 political parties have long been jockeying for positions. Though the fact that the presidency is not up for grabs has tempered international interest, the Cameroonian political classes have been fully engaged, in part because the next Parliament is expected to play a critical role in creating a constitutionally-mandated Senate and setting the stage for determining President Paul Biya's successor (ref a). Few political observers believe the CPDM's dominance of Parliament is at risk, but there is a general sense that the CPDM leadership is aggressively seeking to protect its base and extend its reach. One line of speculation posits that the CPDM leadership has demanded an unassailable control of Parliament to facilitate the 74-year old Biya's presumed intention to remove constitutional term limits on his "reign," which began in [1](#)1984.

[1](#)3. (C) Despite a commanding 149 (out of 180) seats in the former Parliament, the CPDM leadership and party faithful have not taken any element of the upcoming elections for granted. For weeks before the beginning of the official campaign period, Government of Cameroon (GRC) officials have

been unreachable or out of their offices in order to campaign on behalf of the CPDM. Despite President Biya's public injunction against confusing the party and the state, the relationship between the CPDM leadership and their official responsibilities remains ambiguous, at best.

14. (C) The CPDM's campaign strategy is exemplified in the slogan adorning many of their campaign banners: "Vote Useful; Vote CPDM." The CPDM's political agenda, enshrined in a printed manifesto, does not feature prominently in the public campaign. Instead, candidates and party leaders bluntly inform voters that electing the CPDM candidate will result in material benefits from the national government while those regions that elect opposition candidates will suffer from governmental neglect. CPDM slogans turn around lauding Biya and promising peace and stability.

-----  
Infighting Within the Ruling Party  
-----

15. (C) A major theme will be how the CPDM fares, given a rising mutinous streak among some pockets of party activists, fueled by CPDM Central Committee decisions to nominate candidates who had lost the party's primary elections. In the CPDM's nomination system, constituency-level election results are sent to the Central Committee, which subsequently submits an official list of candidates to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINATD), which manages the elections. After reviewing the list of winners from the party's primary elections, the CPDM Central Committee made a number of unilateral changes before submitting the list to MINATD. Some of these changes were publicly well received and justified; the Central Committee

YAOUNDE 00000894 002 OF 003

reversed the nominations of an official who had been convicted of murder and another who had been stopped trying to flee Cameroon with a suitcase of cash. But the Central Committee made its changes unilaterally, and most of the reversals had no apparent motive (leading critics to speculate that bribes changed hands) and angered CPDM activists who had supported the winners of the primary elections (ref b).

16. (U) Some of the disgruntled candidates and activists have begun supporting opposition candidates and publicly expressing their disillusionment with the CPDM, forcing the CPDM to expend energy in areas that might otherwise have been considered "safe." Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni and Assistant Secretary General at the Presidency Rene Sadi (both senior leaders of the CPDM) have been dispatched to Garoua and Douala to fight backfires among party members bucking adherence to Central Committee decisions. For example, one CPDM municipal incumbent, after losing the party nomination in the primaries, publicly vowed never again to work for the CPDM. Now he is back on the campaign trail, supporting his previous opponent in response to, depending on which rumors you believe, threats from the CPDM or a \$3,000 consulting fee.

17. (U) In the last weeks, Inoni, Sadi, Minister of Territorial Administration Marafa and other senior officials (and CPDM leaders) traveled to Cameroon's northern provinces to promote the CPDM party ticket. According to reports from the media and Embassy contacts, the turnout was spectacularly low, fueling speculation that the CPDM is increasingly unpopular in those regions. The UNDP (National Union for Democracy and Progress), which managed to leverage one seat in the previous Parliament into two cabinet posts, stands most to gain from the CPDM's stumbling in this region.

-----  
CPDM "Butchers" Constituencies to Win More Seats  
-----

18. (C) In some areas, the CPDM's strategic maneuvers began

well before the start of the campaign. The controversial restructuring of the constituencies (described by critics as gerrymandering or, in the French term, "butchery") removed one constituency and added 12, leaving a net increase of 11 seats. In the North Province, the GRC eliminated one of the six constituencies, combining it with a region that has traditionally been very strongly CPDM. This move threatens the sole parliamentary seat previously held by the UNDP.

-----  
CPDM Seeks a Foothold in the SDF's Northwest  
-----

¶9. (C) In the SDF's Northwest Province, the GRC added constituencies in such a way so as to replace individual seats that had gone to the SDF with two seats: a safe SDF seat and a second seat construed more favorably for the CPDM.

The CPDM has made a concerted push to make in-roads in the SDF's traditional stronghold, sending emissaries from among the region's elite to argue that support for the opposition has cost the Northwest Province untold benefits in terms of development and other assistance from the CPDM-dominated central government. These campaigners point out that the Northwest Province, home to more than 10 percent of the country's population, does not have a single full minister post in the President's 65-member cabinet, and explicitly blame the Northwest's support for the SDF as the cause of government neglect for the region.

-----  
The Main Opposition  
-----

¶10. (SBU) The SDF, still smarting from its protracted and ugly battle with the splinter faction that became the Alliance of Progressive Forces (AFP), has shown an impressive level of organization and activism. The SDF's primary elections were completed well before the CPDM's and in a more orderly fashion. The SDF's Secretary General, Elizabeth Tamajong, has effectively transmitted SDF messages to the press and diplomatic missions, maintaining a steady stream of articulate criticism of CPDM activities and the GRC's election management. The SDF hopes to beat back CPDM assaults into the SDF's strongholds in the Northwest Province and maintain its position as the main party of opposition.

YAOUNDE 00000894 003 OF 003

Bernard Muna's AFP has also been highly visible in its efforts to unseat the SDF as the main opposition party, launching challenges for 20 seats in six provinces, making it the sixth most competitive party on the national level (after the CPDM, SDF, UNDP, UPC (People's Union of Cameroon), and UDC (Democratic Union of Cameroon)).

-----  
The Up and Comers  
-----

¶11. (U) The 2007 elections will include an unprecedented number of small political parties. Thirty of the 45 parties contesting the election are fielding candidates for fewer than five seats, and 22 parties are running in only one constituency. These micro-parties appear to focus almost exclusively on local political issues and are often based on ethnic groupings. There is a slim chance that one or two of these parties will steal a seat within a multi-seat constituency. More likely, they might have substantial long term impact by forcing the larger, more competitive parties to give greater weight to localized issues in setting national priorities and candidate lists.

-----  
Comment: Despite Imperfections,  
A Genuine Democratic Campaign  
-----

¶12. (C) Although voter apathy remains high, the number of registered voters disappointingly low, and the probability of continued CPDM dominance all but a certainty, some races in this election remain exciting and generally competitive. The urgency of the campaign has led most people to pause, for the moment, in criticizing the GRC's management of the pre-election process. No independent observer is predicting an upset or even a radical change in the balance of power in Parliament, but most agree that the electoral process has shown some evolution over previous years, and that the energetic jockeying by all parties indicates that the churn of democratic politics is on a generally positive trend in Cameroon. End comment.

NELSON